

Paper Trail

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A Bangalore-based designer invents a machine to produce honeycomb paper and hopes to usher in a revolution in packaging, furniture and low-cost housing

KARNATAKA

BANGALORE

Tamil Nadu

Andhra Pradesh



SANJAY RAMCHANDRAN

M.P. NAREN WITH PAPER HONEYCOMB PRODUCTS

By Nirmala Ravindran

The floor of the Vaspar Green Technologies office has a certain bounce to it, as do the stools and chairs. The cushion-like feel comes from paper that has been layered inside the furniture. No, it's not ordinary paper, but of a kind restructured in a honeycomb pattern, which is made from waste paper.

"Paper honeycomb is the only product known for its strength-to-weight ratio as well as low cost," says M.P. Naren, the brain behind the product. Though in use for several decades in the West, the credit goes to Naren for designing an inexpensive machine to manually manufacture the paper honeycomb in bulk. "It costs just Rs 400 as opposed to machines that cost nearly Rs 1 crore and which replace manual labour," he says. A successful product designer, Naren was looking for an alternative material that would be sustainable and inexpensive. "All kinds of paper, even a newspaper, can be used to make paper honeycombs," he adds.

His firm has provided an alternative to the packaging industry. "The reckless cutting of trees for packaging products has to stop," says Naren, who reckons that even

if 5 per cent of the raw materials used in industries and packaging are replaced with this, hundreds of thousands of trees could be saved apart from "a rise of upto 10 per cent in the GDP". The paper honeycomb has passed stringent measures where boxes with fragile products have been dropped from a height of 10 ft. Vaspar has teamed up with several companies in India and even Walmart for alternative solutions to their regular packaging.

Rural India figures big on Naren's company's agenda, where it wants to generate employment and provide low-cost housing using honeycomb paper. The prototype of the houses which are to be set up in Amethi, Rahul Gandhi's constituency in Uttar Pradesh, is also ready. The paper honeycomb houses are reinforced with other materials and even feature a ready-to-assemble toilet. "My one-point solution for employment, eco-friendly production and reducing migration is the paper honeycomb," says Naren confidently. Bangalore city alone produces 350 tonnes of newspaper everyday that can be converted into honeycomb paper for furniture, walls and even flooring. Who said the future was going to be paperless? ■